

REMARKS

By this Amendment, claims 1-48 have been amended. Accordingly, claims 1-48 are pending in the present application.

The objection to the drawings is noted. In response, Applicants have submitted herewith a replacement sheet for Fig. 3 which incorporates the changes suggested by the Examiner. Approval of the changes to Fig. 3, and reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is respectfully requested.

The objection to the abstract is noted. In response, the abstract of the disclosure has been amended as suggested by the Examiner. Reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to the abstract is respectfully requested.

The objection to claims 11, 26 and 40 are noted. In response, these claims have been amended as suggested by the Examiner. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-31 and 33-48 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. In response, claims 2-31 and 33-48 have been amended so as to be in full compliance with all §112 requirements. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-10, 12-25 and 27-31 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,624,424 to Saisaka et al. Claims 11, 26 and 32-48 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Saisaka et al. Applicants respectfully traverse these rejections.

Among the limitations of independent claims 1, 17 and 32 which are neither disclosed nor suggested in the prior art of record is an absorbent in which the barrier cuffs

and backsheet extend past the lateral edges of the barrier layer and terminate at the lateral side edges of the absorbent article. Support for the amendment to claims 1, 17 and 32 can be found in paragraph [0034] of the specification and Fig. 4.

Because the barrier cuffs and backsheet extend past the lateral edges of the barrier layer, breathable zones of reduced stiffness are created in the area surrounding the wearer's thighs. That is, the layers of material forming the absorbent article are arranged so the area surrounding the wearer's thighs does not include any liquid-impervious material. With this structure, a better fitting, less irritating absorbent article which is reduced in stiffness and increased in breathability in the area surrounding the wearer's thighs is formed.

While Saisaka et al. discloses an absorbent article, it neither discloses nor suggests that the barrier cuffs and backsheet extend past the lateral edges of the barrier layer and terminate at the lateral side edges of the absorbent article. In contrast, the figures and description provided in Saisaka et al. specifically teach that the lower end portion of the barrier cuffs are turned inward and fixed between the liquid absorbent member 3 and the side liner sheet 22. See col. 10, lines 27-29; and Fig.5. In fact, inasmuch as Saisaka et al. teaches that the ends of the barrier cuffs are fixed inward of the lateral edges of the absorbent article, it teaches away from the present invention as defined in independent claims 1, 17 and 32. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that independent claims 1, 17 and 32 patentably distinguish over Saisaka et al.

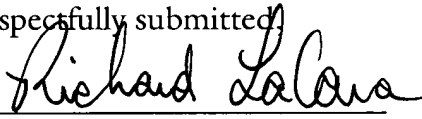
Claims 2-16 depend either directly or indirectly from independent claim 1 and include all of the limitations found therein. Claims 18-31 depend either directly or indirectly from independent claim 17 and include all of the limitations found therein. Claims 33-48 depend either directly or indirectly from independent claim 32 and include all of the limitations found therein. Each of these dependent claims include additional

limitations which, in combination with the limitations of the claims from which they depend, are neither disclosed nor suggested in the art of record. Accordingly, claims 2-16, 18-31 and 33-48 are likewise patentable.

In view of the foregoing, favorable consideration of the amendments to Fig. 3, favorable consideration of the amendments to claims 1-48, and allowance of the present application with claims 1-48 is respectfully and earnestly solicited.

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Respectfully submitted,

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AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

The attached sheet(s) of drawings includes changes to Fig. 3.

Attachment: Replacement sheet

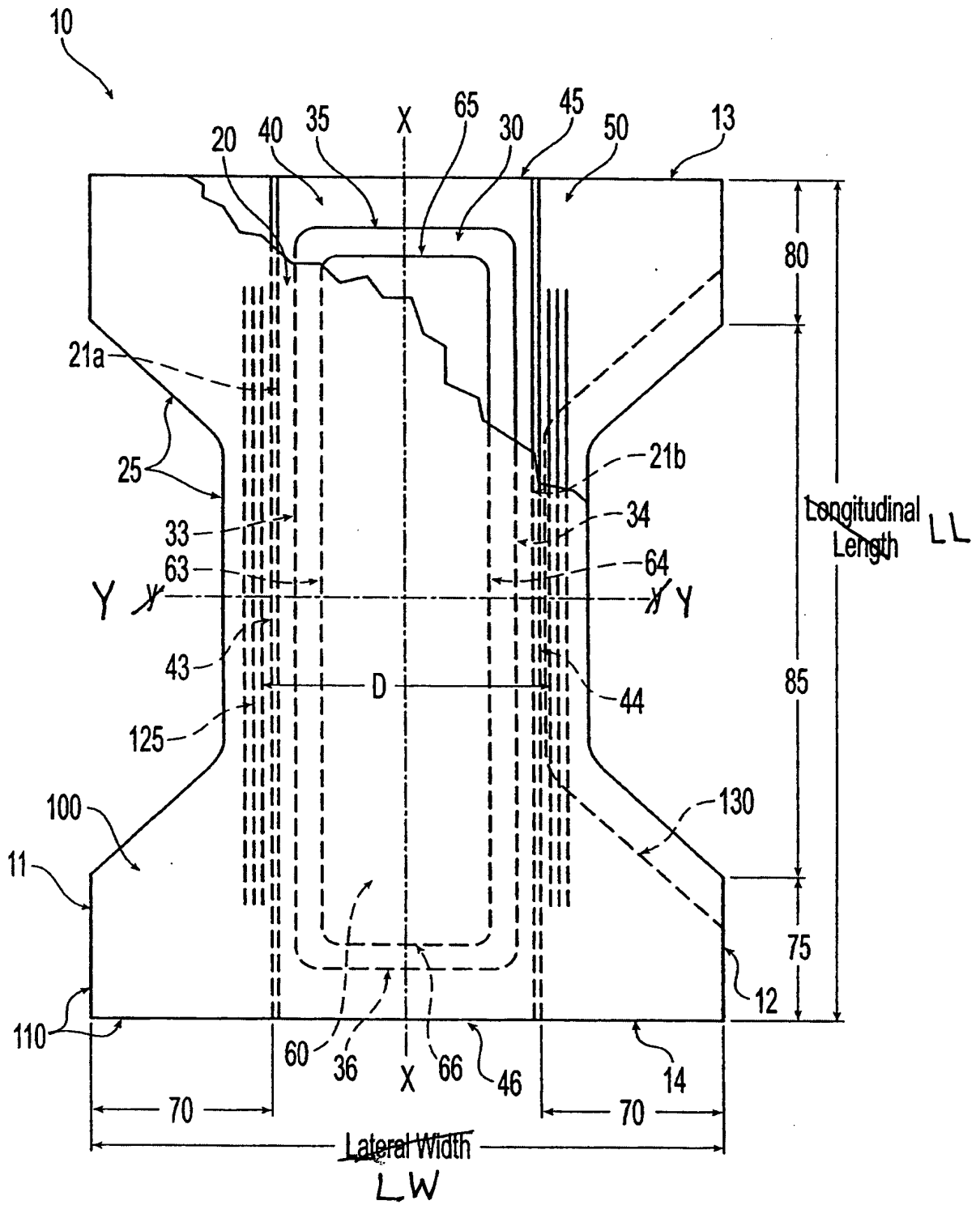


Fig. 3